



## **HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**February 26, 2014 at 4:30 pm  
Council Chambers**

### **COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

Gil Palmer, Chairperson  
Ian Kohen, Vice Chairperson  
Trena Carter, Treasurer  
Kelly Benjamin  
Greg Lewis  
Richard Gold  
John Roberts, Secretary  
Annette Barnes  
Rhea Baker-Ipek

### **COMMISSIONERS ABSENT**

John Stroh  
Tony McClendon

### **STAFF PRESENT**

Lorraine Smith, Director  
Betsy Schuette, Secretary

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## **MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

### **GUESTS PRESENT**

Jeff Logston, City Council Liaison

### **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Commissioner Roberts reported a wrong year at the top of the January 29, 2014 minutes showing the date of January 29, 2013. **Commissioner Gold moved that the January minutes be approved with the amendment of the corrected date. Commissioner Carter seconded. Motion carried. January minutes were approved.**

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Commissioner Carter reported no activity with the Donations Account maintaining a balance of \$6125.74.

### **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

No Report.

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

#### **CASEWORK:**

The office continues to be busy with case work. The following is case activity updates:

- 2 National Origin in Housing, Complainant Interviews-dual filed with EEOC
- 1 Sexual Harassment in Employment, Mediation completed with monetary settlement, apology and employee re-training-dual filed with EEOC
- 3 Technical Assistance; 1 Race in Employment, 1 Sex in Employment and 1 National Origin in Employment
- 2-Technical Assistance Provided; 1 National Origin and 1 Age

Director Smith stated that in the future more Commissioners will need to be involved in the mediation process for more back-up options.

#### **COMMISSION:**

##### **2014 Annual Dinner Planning Meeting**

Director Smith reported that the office is busy planning the 2014 Annual Dinner which is moving along quite smoothly at this point. Director Smith reported 43 tickets currently reserved. As always Director Smith suggests the Commissioners encourage people to attend the annual dinner. Director Smith and Commissioner Gold have met with a potential keynote speaker for next year, Columbus North's cross country coach Rick Weinheimer. Director Smith reported that she and Commissioner Palmer and Commissioner Kohen have been in communications with Julie Del Genio and Melina Kennedy from Cummins to discuss details about the Annual Dinner.

##### **2014 Essay and Art Contests**

Director Smith reported that the Commission received 229 Art & Essay entries and felt the quality of the entries were good. Director Smith stated there were a few less elementary entries than in past years but felt it was because the topic was more challenging. Director Smith also expressed the goal of the contest is to challenge students to think more critically about the issues of Human Rights.

##### **Commissioner Reappointment:**

Director Smith reported that Commissioners Palmer, Carter, Baker-Ipek and Roberts were reappointed by the City Council at their last meeting.

#### **OFFICE:**

- Deputy Director Ramirez is out of the office studying and taking her bar exam and would return to the office in the afternoon of the 27th.
- Director Smith provided a Black History Month presentation to the Cummins African-American Affinity Group on February 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Director Smith and Deputy Director Ramirez were interviewed for The Business Connection Magazine on employers' responsibilities under the ADA.

## **OTHER ACTIVITIES:**

### MACDA (Mayor's Advisory Council on Disability and Accessibility):

Director Smith reported that March is Disability Awareness month and the Sub-Committee Community Awareness is working on community awareness about persons with disability and planting the seed in the community through the month of March. The committee is also planning programs throughout the year as well. Director Smith presented the poster example that would be displayed around the community. In addition to the posters, stickers, bookmarks and access tip sheets for businesses and organizations to help eliminate barriers to persons with disabilities will be distributed.

Director Smith reported another project the committee is working on with an employee of Cummins is a video which highlights the successes of people with disabilities in the education and employment arenas. This video will also be looking at the spectrum of how people with disabilities have become successful. Director Smith stated that it could dispel fear from employers about hiring employees with disabilities. Employers may not know how make accommodation, are afraid to make accommodations or have a fear that people with disabilities cannot perform the job. The project hopes to highlight some of those successes to create a "Role Model Effect" for employers and people with disabilities. Discussion ensued.

### Congratulation Dr. John Roberts:

Director Smith congratulated Commissioner Roberts on completing his dissertation and is now Dr. John Roberts.

### Black History Month Article:

Director Smith reported on an article in the Republic written by Commissioner Roberts for Black History Month. Commissioner Roberts highlighted the topic discussed in the article about his family's educational accomplishments to spite their diverse obstacles and opposition.

## **UPCOMING:**

**Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup> at 11:45 am:** Commissioner Lewis will be providing a presentation to a group of 8<sup>th</sup> graders about the work of the Human Rights Commission and its history. Director Smith stated this is a great example of "Commissioner as an ambassador" model. She also suggested the Commissioners observe the presentation at Northside Middle School which is approximately an hour. Discussion ensued.

**Tuesday, March 4<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 pm-4:00 pm:** Civil Rights Symposium in Indianapolis at the Indiana State Police Museum led by the US Attorney General Joseph Hogsett as well as other speakers. They will be speaking on the current and emerging issues in the area of Human Rights. The Commissioners are invited to attend.

**Monday, March 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm:** Feminism Club is showing a documentary to raise awareness of human trafficking at AMC Showcase 12. Tickets are \$10 and 95 reservations are needed by February 27<sup>th</sup> to assure the film will be shown.

## **FOR ACTION**

### **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

The Commissioners were given their ballots to vote for the election or re-election of officers. They were tallied with a unanimous vote of the following:

- Re-Election of Commissioner Palmer for Chair
- Re-Election of Commissioner Kohen for Vice-Chair
- Re-Election of Commissioner Carter for Treasurer
- Re-Election of Commissioner Roberts for Secretary

## **2014 Laws Award Recipient**

The Laws Award Committee including Commissioners Kohen, Carter and Lewis met and selected Tom Harmon as the 2014 Laws Award Recipient. Mr. Harmon is a leader of CAMEO and in his family's business. In addition, Mr. Harmon was instrumental in bringing together several families to form the African American Fund of Bartholomew County. Mr. Harmon was selected out of eight nominations and his work was befitting of the award criteria. **Commissioner Roberts moved to accept the recommendation of the Laws Award Committee that the 2014 William R. Laws Award be awarded to Tom Harmon. Commissioner Barnes seconded. Motion carried.**

## **DISCUSSION**

- Chairperson Palmer inquired about the update regarding the viewing of the 'Threads into Diversity' video and any assistance the Human Rights Commission was providing. Director Smith reported the last viewing she was aware of was at First Presbyterian and believes they are progressively able to get viewings out into the community. Discussion ensued.
- Chairperson Palmer also inquired about the progress of the Oral History project. Director Smith reported that there are still interviews that need to be completed and then editing the video. Discussion ensued.
- Commissioner Gold reported on the efforts given by the area high school students who host the Dance Marathon fund raiser. The students go to businesses and organizations to give presentations on Turning Point Domestic Violence Services and the Dance Marathon. Commissioner Gold suggested the students present to the Commission not for monetary but for volunteer help. Discussion ensued.

## **LIAISON REPORTS**

- Commissioner Baker-Ipek reported update regarding the Inter-Faith Forum. They asked the Human Rights Commission for help drafting a letter for a grant and Director Smith assisted. Discussion ensued.
- Commissioner Lewis stated that he has been unable to attend the CAMEO meetings since he has a conflict with the Dance Marathon meetings.
- Commissioner Roberts reported that he plans to attend the Transit Advisory board meeting to take place Friday following the meeting but did attend the previous month's meeting. Discussions at that meeting included advertisement on the buses which was tabled. Other items of interest include the potential for transportation reaching out farther into the county and potential connectors to transportation going to Franklin, Greenwood, Southport, Beach Grove and Indianapolis. They have received a bid from Midwest Transit for a new van/bus for call-a-bus. The transit department has extended hours to one hour longer during the week and stopping one hour earlier on Saturday's. They will also be looking into a study for having refillable transit cards. The group also discussed inter-plant transportation for Cummins. Discussion ensued.

## **ADJOURNMENT:**

**Chairperson Palmer moved for adjournment, seconded by Commissioner Roberts. Motion carried meeting adjourned.**